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A MIDDLEBURY WITHOUT AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Class of 2028 and 2028.5 sees drop in diversity, sparking concerns

By MAGGIE BRYAN
Senior News Editor

Middlebury's incoming classes of 2028 and 2028.5 are the first to be admitted in light of the Supreme Court's decision to ban the consideration of race in college admissions. The new challenges posed by the elimination of affirmative action were reflected in a sharp decrease in students of color and a smaller drop in first-generation college students among the first year classes, prompting concerns from student leaders of affinity groups on campus.

The classes of 2028 and 2028.5 comprise 26% of students of color according to a recent college press release, a nine percentage point drop from the class of 2027 just last year, which included 35% of students of color, as published on the college's admissions page. Six percent of the incoming class identifies as Asian American, four percent as Black or African American, 13% as Hispanic and six percent as two or more races, according to preliminary self-reported data from domestic students provided by the Admissions Office.

At just four percent, Black students make up the smallest minority within the first year class. The number of Black students in the first year class decreased by over 20% this year, which President of the Black Student Union (BSU) Che Defreitas '27 said is especially disappointing considering Black students are already poorly represented here; during the 2023–2024 school year there were only 157 on campus, according to the 2023-24 Common Data Set.

Although the number of domestic Hispanic students only decreased by less than one percent this year compared to last year's data, leaders of Alianza, a Latinx, Hispanic and Caribbean affinity group on campus, expressed a similar concern.

"I feel like any decrease, even if it is minimal and not apparent, is felt by the community. As it is we

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TOM NEVINS / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

In the wake of a ban on affirmative action, this year's first year class saw a 26% drop in students of color.

COURTESY PHOTO / PAUL DAHM

Dean of Language Schools Stephen Snyder named interim president

By EVAN WEISS, MAGGIE BRYAN & RYAN McELROY
News Editor, Senior News Editor & Editor in Chief

Middlebury College has announced that the role of interim president next year will be filled by Stephen Snyder, dean of Middlebury Language Schools and vice president for Academic Affairs, beginning Jan. 1, 2025. He will serve through June 30, or until the 18th president of the college is chosen.

In May, current President Laurie Patton announced her plans to leave Middlebury after accepting a position as President of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. Patton will depart the college in January, nearly 10 years after her arrival as president in July 2015.

Snyder recently served as the interim dean of the Middlebury Institute in Monterey (MIIS) for eight months and is currently on sabbatical, according to a letter on Friday from Ted Truscott '83, chair of the Board of Trustees. In addition to his other roles, Snyder is the Kawashima Professor of Japanese Studies, having joined the department in 2005 before being named dean of Language Schools in 2014.

Snyder has also been

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News In Brief: college sees decrease in fall enrollment

By MAGGIE BRYAN
Senior News Editor

This fall, there are 2,774 students enrolled at Middlebury's Vermont campus, an increase from 2,546 in spring 2024, but a slight decrease from 2,800 in fall 2023. Currently, 128, or five percent, of those students are living off campus, and the remaining 2,646 are living in on-campus college housing, according to Dean of ResLife AJ Place.

The discrepancy between fall and spring enrollment results from the atypically large class of 2023.5 that graduated last February as well as from more students choosing to go abroad in the spring than in the fall.

This semester, 208 students are studying away, according to an email to The Campus from Middlebury International Programs. That group consists primarily of students studying abroad and a handful who are studying at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (MIIS).

For the first fall in three years, there are no students living at the Inn on the Green or any other off-campus college housing. Director of Business Services Matt Curran wrote in an email to The Campus that the college plans to sell Inn on the Green in 2025. It is currently being used by a daycare that is under renovation.

The decrease in enrollment was also affected by the size of the incoming first year class. Middlebury received 12,541 applications for the classes of 2028 and 2028.5. Fifteen hundred of these applicants were offered admission, and 700 enrolled. This year's acceptance rate was the highest it has been in three years, at 12%.

This fall's first year class is made up of 600 students and 100 additional Febs will matriculate in February 2025. The classes of 2028 and 2028.5 represent 42 states plus the District of Columbia, the most common being Massachusetts, New York, California, Vermont and Connecticut, in that order. They also represent 51 countries, the most common being China, Canada, India, Hong Kong and Brazil, in that order.

There are 30 incoming Posse scholars, joined by Middlebury's second cohort of QuestBridge students. The class is made up of 26% students of color, 14% international students and 16% first-generation college students. The class represents the first cohort of Middlebury students admitted without affirmative action, after a June 2023 Supreme Court decision that banned the consideration of race or ethnicity in college admissions.

TOM NEVINS / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

DINING SERVICES, THE GRILLE REFRESH VENUES AND MENUS

By REBECCA DORIAN
Contributing Writer

This semester students, faculty and staff have started off the fall semester with numerous changes in the dining halls and retail food operations. A new retail dining option, South East Asian (S.E.A.) Dinette by Sushi Maru, will exclusively operate the space in McCullough Student Center previously occupied by Wilson Café. The Grille also shifted its hours to accommodate the need for late-night food options and a new meal plan for faculty and staff was added.

John Maru, the founder and chef behind Sushi Maru, explained that the new space will offer a variety of hot and cold menu items including ramen noodle soup, pho noodle soup, biryani, fried egg noodles, bao buns, fruit juices and more. Maru hopes to include signature dishes from many Southeast Asian countries, a shift from Wilson Cafe's previous fare of bagel sandwiches and coffee.

Maru expects to operate S.E.A. Dinette in McCullough as long as it is supported by the community. With this new venture, he hopes to serve students, staff and faculty more broadly on campus and in Addison County.

"What I'm always trying to figure out is how I can serve the students more broadly on campus with my food," Maru wrote in an email to The Campus. "I like serving people, and food was the only easy way for me to serve them."

The Dinette opened on Monday, Sept. 9, and will be open seven days a week. Customers can pay with declining balance, cash or card, but cannot use meal swipes.

The Grille will also see some changes this year, modifying its open hours in response to patterns of student activity. It will now be open from 7 p.m. to 12 a.m. Wednesday through Sunday, whereas last year it was open Tuesday through Saturday.

Evening Service Manager for Restaurants and Retail Jen DelMonte instituted this change after observing consistently low turnout on Tuesdays and Sunday night rushes at Midd Xpress that demonstrated the need for late-night food options on Sundays. To accommodate for The Grille's closure at 8:00 p.m. on Mondays and Tuesdays, S.E.A. Dinette will stay open until 10:00 p.m. on those days.

DelMonte expressed her desire to make The Grille a comforting and welcomig space for students.

"I am really trying to cultivate a late night vibe at The Grille for all the students to know that you're welcome. Come and hang out. My staff and myself really really love the students and doing what we do," DelMonte told The Campus.

Students can look forward to new events and promotions in The Grille, including screenings

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College to debut new tennis courts, upgraded throwing fields this month

By CAROLINE JIAO
News Editor

This fall, Middlebury will add a new outdoor tennis facility along with throwing areas for the track and field teams to its athletics facilities. The new construction is planned to be completed in late September and will feature 12 new tennis courts on the corner of South Street and Porter Field Road, as well as enhanced areas for shot put, javelin, discus and hammer throw.

The additional tennis courts will support more productive practices and matches while increasing opportunities for other students to play, according to men's tennis Head Coach Andrew Thomson '10.

"Our club tennis team is quite popular, and many students, staff, and faculty enjoy playing on our courts too," he wrote.

Co-captain of the women's tennis team Claudia Miller '25 expressed her excitement for the updates and shared that the courts arrived just in time, as both tennis teams have continued to grow in numbers this year.

"We are all really excited about the new tennis courts, and I think this new facility has a lot of potential to really benefit our program," Miller wrote in an email to The Campus. "The courts are not ready yet, but it looks like they are making great progress, and all of us are hopeful that they will be done for our Middlebury Invitational which takes place in early October and closes out the fall tennis season for the women's team."

Considerations of moving the tennis courts away from their current place next to Proctor Dining Hall began almost 20 years ago when a campus master plan indicated that space would be the preferred location of a student center, according to Director of Athletics Erin Quinn '86. The college hopes the expanded student center will create a new hub of campus life with a 1,200 capacity dining hall and consolidated student services, according to The Campus' previous reporting.

The decision-making process also involved members of Facilities Services, tennis coaches, the Athletic Communications Department, Assistant Director of Athletics for Operations and Events Franklin Dean-Farrar and Executive Vice President of Finance and Administration David Provost, according to Quinn.

"In recent years, the discussions were renewed because the Proctor... courts were in need of renovations, and it did not seem prudent to put a lot of work into those courts if they would eventually be dismantled for a student center," Quinn wrote.

As the college's tennis teams continue to thrive in the NCAA National Championships and NESCAC conference, Thomson has high hopes for the upcoming training season within the new facilities.

"Both men's and women's tennis have been a force on the national stage across the past two decades of play in NCAA DIII tennis," he wrote. "We believe our new facility will help us continue to attract top players to our programs, and with more courts increase our capacity to host championship level events."

Thomson told The Campus that the new courts will also provide better viewing for spectators.

"Another bonus of our new facility is that the new court layout will allow for ideal spectating of the college dual match format where six singles can be played across one row, with a break in the middle for viewing. Additionally, 12 courts allow for a men's and women's dual match to occur concurrently which might add to the excitement," he wrote.

The master plan mentioned by Quinn had also called to move the preexisting throwing fields to a different location in order to make space for the 12 new tennis courts. Despite some initial concern, the new fields are an improvement over the previous athletic facilities, according to Martin Beatty '84, head track and field coach.

"We weren't sure at first, but we actually love the design," Beatty wrote in an email to The Campus. "We like how it's played out, and it'll actually work better than the previous field."

Beatty said that the new fields will not only be more spectator-friendly, but also safer and more efficient during practice.

The new construction divides hammer and discus into separate spaces with bigger safety cages. The shot putters now have an additional ring, and javelin throwers can practice on an extra runway.

"It's better. It's a hundred percent better than what we had before," Beatty wrote.

Reilly Isler '25, co-captain of the women's track and field team, agreed with his assessment of the updated area.

"Everyone is super excited about the new facilities and I definitely think that they will be beneficial for training, specifically having two shot put rings instead of one," Isler wrote in an email to The Campus. "Our team has continued to get bigger over the years which means that we have more and more throwers every year so the extra space is very appreciated."

As the fall sports season begins this week, athletes and their coaches have an expanded set of facilities to match the growing teams at Middlebury.

"Middlebury Tennis is thrilled to enter an exciting new chapter with our new 12-court outdoor tennis facility, and we are incredibly appreciative of all the support we receive from the college." Thomson wrote.

MAGGIE BRYAN / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

New tennis courts situated at the corner of South Street are taking shape.

Dean of Language Schools Stephen Snyder named interim predsident

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recognized by various literary organizations; in 2020, he won the American Book Prize and was a finalist for the National Book Award for his translation of "The Memory Police." He also was named a finalist for the International Booker Prize for other works.

"The Board of Trustees and I feel privileged that in Steve we've been able to name such a prolific scholar, admired teacher, accomplished administrator, and above all, generous colleague to serve as interim president," Truscott wrote. He added that the decision to select Snyder was unanimous among the Board of Trustees.

Truscott announced Snyder's appointment at the first faculty meeting of the semester on Friday, Sept. 6, held at the Bread Loaf campus in Ripton, Vt. The faculty address was followed by an announcement to staff members on the main campus and a letter sent to all community members Friday morning.

Truscott mentioned that, being on sabbatical, Snyder was initially reluctant to accept the position. After encouragement from other trustees with whom Snyder is close, he accepted the position.

"We are so indebted to Steve and so grateful to him, he and Linda, because Linda's a part of this too, that they would forgo the second half of their sabbatical to serve Middlebury College," Truscott said. "I mean, that is an act of true love for Middlebury."

Truscott also reminded faculty of the importance of honoring Snyder's sabbatical — he was not in attendance at the meeting — and that Snyder's role as interim president does not begin until January.

"We want to let Steve be on sabbatical. Laurie Patton is still the president of Middlebury College. So if you would let Steve have the first half of his sabbatical and let Laurie be the president of Middlebury College, I think we're going to have a great fall together."

In July, the Middlebury Board of Trustees appointed a presidential search committee of 18 community members. The committee is chaired by Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees Kirtley Cameron '95 and includes eight other current or former trustees, three Middlebury College professors, two MIIS faculty, several members of the staff and administration, and one current student.

The committee's charge is to recommend a final candidate to the Board of Trustees, who retains the sole power to select the college's next president.

Board of Trustees leadership also selected the executive search firm Isaacson, Miller to assist the committee in recruiting candidates and managing the process. In an email to The Campus, search process leadership wrote that trustees were "impressed by their thorough candidate research and vetting process, as well as their ability to place highly qualified candidates from a broad range of diverse backgrounds." Isaacson, Miller has notably placed presidents at Bates College, Hamilton College, Michigan State University, Stanford University and Northwestern University.

Throughout the search, the committee has emphasized its efforts to engage community members in the process, allowing them to express their vision of Middlebury's next president. In his letter, Truscott announced the search committee's plans for ongoing outreach, including a listening session with MIIS faculty on Sept. 12 and a second listening session for students, faculty and staff in Wilson Hall on Oct. 8. The search committee is also soliciting feedback from faculty, staff and students through online surveys.

Search leadership wrote that "The [presidential search] timeline will depend on the time it will take to find the right candidate. We do not want to rush the process, but at the same time we understand it will be important to have a president in place by the start of the next academic year, if not sooner." Truscott told the assembled faculty at the Friday meeting that the committee hopes to select the college's next president by February 2025.

"We want to hear what you have to say about this, we want to have as open and transparent of a process as we possibly can and of course do a great job of selecting a future president of Middlebury and building on Laurie's awesome legacy," Truscott said.

DINING SERVICES, THE GRILLE AND MCCOULLOUGH REFRESH MENUS AND OFFERINGS

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of NFL games on Thursdays and Sundays, which will feature special menu items like wings.

Due to popular demand, buffalo chicken egg rolls have returned to the menu for Wednesday nights only, as well as new items like New York-style pizza, made fresh in stone pizza ovens.

DelMonte also handles marketing for the Retail Operations wing of Dining Services, and encourages students to follow Middlebury Dining's Instagram to get updates about events and promotions. The Grille is almost fully staffed, and DelMonte says they are excited about students' return to campus.

In addition to changes at the Grille, a new meal plan for faculty and staff will begin Sept. 20. The plan offers three options with varied amounts of meal swipes and declining balance. Like the student dining plan, faculty and staff will use their Middlebury ID cards to swipe into dining halls and spend declining balance. Participants pay for their meal plan through payroll deductions all at once or in installments.

A similar meal plan was available to faculty and staff before Covid-19, and Executive Director of Food Service Operations Dan Detora is excited to bring the program back.

In an email to The Campus, Detora noted enthusiasm from faculty and staff about the revamped meal plan.

"So far the faculty and staff that I have spoken with have been very grateful and are excited about the meal plans," Detora wrote.

This plan will not only provide faculty and staff with more on-campus lunch options, but will also offer an opportunity to participate in a part of campus life that is integral to students.

In an email to faculty and staff on Aug. 20, Detora highlighted the importance of collective engagement to the operational objectives of Dining Services.

"Our primary goal is to ensure we're meeting the evolving needs of our students in support of our educational mission while continuing to provide essential opportunities for community connection among students, faculty, and staff based on volume and patterns of use at all our facilities," Detora wrote.

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already are not a big portion of this college to begin with and it's already difficult to find a sense of belonging at the college," wrote David Cordon '26, co-president of Alianza, in an email to The Campus. "That's a large margin which makes me a little concerned for the future of diversity at Middlebury and for the future of the BIPOC students at our college."

With a decline in the proportion of students of color to white students, Alianza Co-President Brandon Rodriguez '25 also worried about continued advocacy for the needs of Latinx students.

"With fewer Latinx students and reduced racial diversity, there may be less representation in student organizations, leadership roles, and decision-making processes. This could lead to decreased advocacy for issues specifically affecting the Latinx community and reduced visibility of their experiences and needs," Rodriguez wrote.

Tufts University also saw a decrease in the number of Black and Latinx students enrolled this year. Other peer institutions of Middlebury such as Bowdoin College witnessed more moderate declines in diversity: The incoming class at Bowdoin is made up of 39% students of color, a decrease of only three percentage points from last year, according to The Bowdoin Orient.

In June 2023, Middlebury announced its commitment to adhere to the law following the Supreme Court's decision but reaffirmed its commitment to diversity. The college continues to strategize ways to build diversity without affirmative action, partnering with the Posse Foundation and QuestBridge, both of which provide students from low-income backgrounds a full-ride scholarship. Middlebury just announced its partnership with College Track, an organization that works in 12 centers across the U.S., making a 10-year commitment to supporting scholars facing systematic barriers to higher education.

Dean of Admissions Nicole Curvin highlighted these partnerships and other outreach efforts in her address at the first all-faculty meeting of the semester on Friday, Sept. 6 at Middlebury's Bread Loaf campus.

"Our team is already out in the world. We had a staff member who just returned from India. We have a staff member right now who's recruiting at Atlanta, Georgia. This is an exciting time to get out there and continue to talk about all that Middlebury does," Curvin said.

Still, questions remain about the effectiveness of the college's strategies given the demographics of the incoming class. Defreitas said that Middlebury's current efforts do not go far enough to remedy the college's lack of diversity.

"Things like Posse, Questbridge and test-optional help with diversity, but realistically it's like putting a few drops of water into a juice and expecting it to taste watered down," Defreitas wrote.

To address the root of diversity, Defreitas believes that Middlebury admissions should stop giving preferential admission to the children or family members of alumni, thereby eliminating legacy admissions.

"Colleges want returning customers if they can collect them," he wrote. "A cycle develops, allowing this institution to readmit and retain many of these affluent white families' children, while admitting a handful of Black and other POC students alongside [white students]."

As the admissions office grapples with recruiting a diverse cohort of applicants, Rodriguez and Defreitas both stressed that a commitment to diversity must go beyond the period of recruitment, and must also prioritize the retention of students of color. Defreitas emphasized the importance of supportive community structures, including affinity groups like BSU, when it comes to supporting the mental health of students of color.

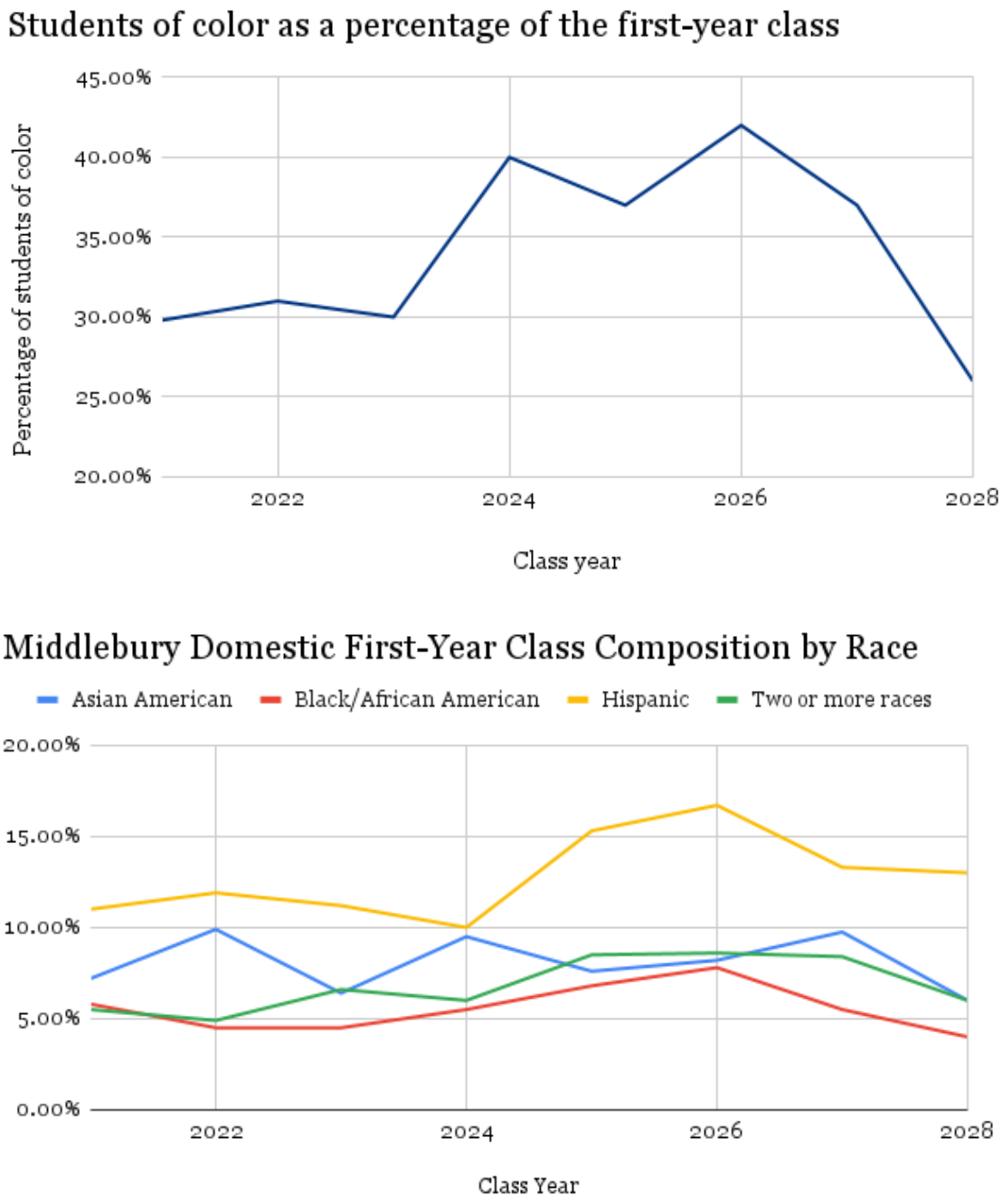
"It is vital for our overall mental well-being as simply knowing a space for us exists can provide relief in one way or another," Defreitas wrote.

Although concerns continue around representation at Middlebury, Rodriguez was optimistic after working at this year's first year orientation.

"I was surprised that I met a lot of hispanic and black students who joined Middlebury because of many organizations that target their identity's," Rodriguez wrote.

Curvin echoed the hope for an inclusive student body, expressing her desire to build on the data from the admitted class of first years and expand Middlebury's relationships across the country.

"We remain firmly on the path to build an inclusive Middlebury community through our holistic admissions process while staying within the legal requirements. Our work is looking for unique individuals who will thrive at Middlebury — not simply a number, characteristic or a statistic," Curvin wrote.



MAGGIE BRYAN / DATA FROM MIDDLEBURY HISTORICAL DATA

MCCULLOUGH MAIL CENTER GETS A NEW LOOK

By ROSELLA GRAHAM
News Editor

Renovations began on the mailroom in McCullough Student Center on Monday, June 10, and concluded on Friday, July 19. These changes were part of a general overhaul of the downstairs of the student center, including a new locker system, updated flooring and an updated mail retrieval system.

This remodeling was initiated to accommodate the shifting trend over the years towards students receiving less letter mail and more packages.

The old mailroom had about 2,000 individual mailboxes designated to each student. However, with an uptick in the number of students on campus in recent years, especially after Covid-19, the number of assignable boxes quickly became insufficient.

To accommodate the growing number of students on campus, the mailroom installed 290 shared lockers that workers will assign to students on a one-time basis.

Manager of Custodial and Support Services Jodie Keith described the month-long construction process in an interview with The Campus.

"The first piece was removing the mailboxes. We had some basic electrical work because we needed to have outlets," Keith said.

Keith also mentioned that additional installations like data ports for the computerized lockers and a releveling of the floor were needed to ensure the new lockers were fully accessible and functional, and did not interfere with the existing infrastructure of the student center.

After the major renovations were complete, Black Diamond Builders of Brandon, Vt. installed the lockers and trained the mailroom workers on the same day. The new system was chosen after comparisons to other colleges' mail centers, according to Keith.

"Williams College uses the locker system and package processing software. We visited Williams to see this software system, and then we went to University of New Hampshire to see another system, and decided to go with [Williams']," Keith said.

Prior to the renovations, anything larger than an envelope had to be picked up from the window and signed off on. Now, not only have hours increased, but students can pick up their packages throughout the week as long as the packages have already been placed into a locker.

"Last week we averaged about 700 packages a day," said Ruby Neustadt '25, a mailroom employee. "Now that students are here they have been turning over faster and we can get more packages in lockers so students can pick up at their convenience."

Relying on a QR code and scanner, mailroom employees receive the packages while identifying available lockers to place them in. After assigning the locker to a student for pick up, the student receives an email with the locker number and a one-time pin to unlock it. Assigned lockers with packages in them can also be opened by scanning the Middlebury ID of the corresponding student.

For smaller envelopes, there is a folder system that uses the same software to identify free slots in which to place mail for pick-up. Once that student picks up their mail, it can be used for another student.

"When we used to process packages, we would write the name of the student on the box, and then we also printed out a sticker with a Universal Product Code (UPC) on it," Keith said. "We no longer do those two steps, so things move very quickly, and we can get packages into lockers really quickly; sometimes the turnover is under two hours."

In addition to the reduced wait time, the mailroom will no longer have to rely on the warehouse behind McCullough at the beginning of the school year to manage the influx of packages for new students.

"It was hot and not very clean, and the lines of students would have to wait in the road, and it wasn't safe... I just think the workflow is just so much better for the staff," Keith said.

COURTESY PHOTOS / JODIE KEITH

The new mail center has about a tenth of the lockers compared to the previous facilities.

The same number of workers will still need to do on-campus deliveries but the mailroom anticipates hiring fewer workers when it comes to processing packages. These changes have transformed the way mailroom workers receive and process packages and eased the experience of students stopping by McCollough to pick up their mail, according to Keith.

FEMA RESPONDS TO VERMONT FLOODING, WITH HELP FROM MIDDLEBURY ALUMNUS

By BEN WAGNER
Local Editor

On Aug. 20, President Biden approved a major disaster declaration, Disaster 4810, in response to the July 9–11 flooding which hit seven Vermont counties this past summer, making the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assistance funding available in the affected counties. At the time of this announcement, FEMA teams were still in the state responding to Disaster 4720, a more severe flooding event that occurred last year in July 2023.

In order for FEMA to begin operating in response to a disaster, minimum damage amounts called indicators must be reached, explained FEMA external affairs coordinator Kimberly Fuller. Fuller explained that the time it took FEMA teams to assess the damage for indicators resulted in the time delay between the disaster itself in July and the declaration made by Biden in August.

In order to gain access to FEMA assistance, the governor of the affected state must contact FEMA for an Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA). FEMA then assesses damages by both responding to calls and physically looking for damage, and then sends its report to the President, according to Fuller.

While more major disasters, such as Hurricane Irene in 2011, may warrant an emergency declaration, which does not require a PDA, less major disasters require even more time, possibly months, to be assessed, especially in areas like Vermont with small, diffuse populations.

Middlebury alum Sofia West '23, a former International and Global Studies major from California, has been on the ground with FEMA as a member of the FEMA Corps. FEMA Corps is a program within the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) program for 18–26 year-olds that deploys teams based on national needs to work on projects accomplishing FEMA's mission-critical functions: disaster survivor assistance, individual assistance, logistics, planning and geographic information system, and public assistance, according to West.

While in Vermont, West has primarily worked on project grants related to last summer's flooding. However, after the declaration of this most recent disaster, her team was briefly deployed working in Disaster Survivor Assistance (DSA), meaning they spent time canvassing communities and helping them apply for assistance from FEMA.

"There was about an hour and a half between the declaration announcement and our first survivor interaction in the town of Barre, breaking an unofficial FEMA-wide record of fastest DSA (Disaster Survivor Assistance) deployment in history- pretty neat!" West wrote in an email to The Campus.

Fuller explained that FEMA teams "go where the people are" to help them gain access to funding. In order to access assistance, survivors have to register loss and damage, among other documentation.

In the approximately four days West's team was in the field in August, they knocked on over 200 doors in flood-affected areas and spoke with more than 100 survivors. In Vermont, "going where the people are" has also involved setting up at local farmer's markets to speak with locals about registering their damage and helping them through the process via an app on their smartphones.

Fuller explained that while citizens can apply for assistance online, lack of awareness about this option, limited Wi-Fi availability and complexities in the application process can make it difficult for aid to reach survivors. In order to gain access to funding, survivors have to be both eligible and have given FEMA all of the information it requires. DSA teams help facilitate that process.

FEMA is diligent in its work to reach survivors and help them apply for assistance, Fuller explained. The agency tries to contact survivors through various methods, multiple times.

As of Sept. 7, 1,103 individuals had registered for assistance in response to Disaster 4810, with $2,926,239 in aid already approved, Fuller told The Campus. She reported that she expected approximately five million dollars of individual assistance to ultimately be approved in response to the July floods.

"Overall, it was an intense experience that necessitated a lot of interpersonal skills blended with FEMA assistance knowledge, but one that provided a more inclusive foundational awareness of FEMA operations," West wrote of her time doing DSA work.

COURTESY PHOTO / FEMA
FEMA is responsible assessing damages from domestic disasters and helps coordinate federal response for recovery.

COURTESY PHOTO / SOFIA WEST
Middlebury alumna Sophia West '23 has been working with FEMA this year in Vermont.

There are currently 10 DSA teams and two FEMA Corps teams operating in Vermont. DSA teams have registered approximately 200 survivors over 3,587 survivor interactions and 8,000 home visits. Teams have also visited 300 community-based organizations, 550 businesses and 300 public spaces.

FEMA also provides public assistance funds to local municipalities to support the reconstruction of infrastructure, such as roads, and support local nonprofits, such as food banks, impacted by the flooding.

Congress closed its most recent session in January without approving additional funding for FEMA as it traditionally does, prompting the public to worry about assistance fund availability. Local and government nonprofit funding will be put on hold, but individual assistance will remain unaffected by this lack of funding, Fuller explained.

West expects additional FEMA funding to eventually be approved.

West noted that in an ideal world, Vermont would become more prepared for natural disasters, and that increasing preparedness is a key part of FEMA's mission. However, for now, FEMA's focus remains on more immediate recovery in the state.

"FEMA has been steadfastly supporting Vermonters through multiple disasters and will continue to do so as long as there is a need," West wrote.

HOMEWARD BOUND HOSTS WOOFSTOCK: WALK FOR THE ANIMALS, RAISING OVER $40,000

By MANDY BERGHELA
Senior Local Editor

If you drove along Route 7 on Saturday, you may have seen a parade of dogs and their owners decked out in colorful tie-dye T-shirts. This was Middlebury's Woofstock: Walk for the Animals, an annual fundraising event for Homeward Bound: Addison County's Humane Society.

Founded in 1976, Homeward Bound serves over 1,200 animals annually, including cats, dogs, rabbits and more. According to its website, its mission is "to be a community-centered shelter that supports the human-animal bond through compassionate care, adoption, education, and advocacy."

The shelter also offers affordable spay and neuter services, along with free basic medical care for companion animals in emergencies when owners are unable to provide care. These services are made possible, in part, through fundraising efforts like Woofstock.

Since its inaugural dog-walking event in 1998, Middlebury's Woofstock walk has drawn nearly 150 participants and around 100 dogs each year. This year, approximately 86 dogs attended, and the event surpassed Homeward Bound's goal of raising $40,000 with over $47,875 raised as of Wednesday morning.

The steady-paced walk was one mile long. Dogs and their owners began at the Memorial Sports Center and took a loop south along Route 7, then back around to the Middlebury Municipal Pool, where it ended with a splash: a pool party for the dogs with a lot of floats, which many participants said is the highlight of Woofstock.

Executive Director of Homeward Bound Krista Malaney had been looking forward to this event for a long time, as this is her first Woofstock in her role.

"I have always loved animals all my life, so this is really special," Malaney said. "Woofstock is the real big fundraiser for Homeward Bound, and it not only is giving attention to the shelter and all of the work that we do there, but it is also a really great community event where people have opportunities to not only come out on a nice summer day with their animals, but also celebrate the joys of pet ownership and what it brings to people."

Along with the walk and pool party, Woofstock provided music, food from A&W, and treats and bandanas for the dogs.

Hannah Manley, Homeward Bound's Director of Development, was pleased with the turnout and grateful for all the support from the Addison County community and beyond, as well as the opportunity to reunite with many of the adopted dogs.

"The dogs that are here are a hodgepodge of dogs locally from the area, and some that were adopted from Homeward Bound," Manley said. "It definitely is a bit of a reunion for those who did adopt from us, so it's fun for staff members to see familiar faces."

Matt Longman, Dean of the Sophomore Experience and a board member of Homeward Bound, attended the event with his dog Kylo, who he often takes on walks around Middlebury's campus.

"We look forward to this every year," Longman said. "It is so important to raise awareness for shelters like Homeward Bound for all the work they do not only for animals but for humans too. It brings the community together, which is why we love it."

Students and the public can find various opportunities to volunteer with the animals at the shelter by visiting their location on Boardman Street or the Homeward Bound Website. Homeward Bound is open to the public Tuesdays–Saturdays from 9 a.m.–3 p.m. and students are encouraged to show up.

MANDY BERGHELA / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
Pets and their owners had a chance to swim in the Middlebury Municipal Pool.

ADAGIO CHOCOLATES AIMS TO BRING HIGH-QUALITY CHOCOLATE, BUILD COMMUNITY

By AGNES WANG
Local Editor

A small boutique nestled downstairs at 52 Main St. in downtown Middlebury is the home of the town's sole chocolate shop, Adagio Chocolates.

Upon stepping into the shop, customers' attention is drawn to the detailed world map on its wall with flag pins indicating the origins of its cacao beans, with white pins marking the locations of the chocolate manufacturers.

The shop sells more than 250 varieties of chocolate products, sourced from cacao beans across 30 countries and crafted by 32 different manufacturers worldwide, according to founder and owner Allan Sirotkin. Adagio emphasizes transparency and quality when selecting their chocolates. Each variety is carefully chosen based on its traceability, ensuring that the origin of every cacao bean is well-documented.

Sirotkin also said that Adagio values the stories and missions of the chocolate makers, prioritizing those who operate as B Corporations, meaning they meet high standards of social and environmental performance, or who generally demonstrate a commitment to sustainable and ethical practices beyond commercial interests.

"In opening up that process of making it transparent where the chocolate is coming from, you make it possible for everybody to be treated fairly along the way, and for there to be good environmental practices. And you can call people out on what's happening," Sirotkin said.

Adagio's grand opening, "Music, Magic, & Chocolates" — taking place after the businesses' soft-launch in May — is planned for Sept. 20 and will double as a flood relief fundraiser in collaboration with The Vermont Community Foundation. The celebration will feature music, a sleight-of-hand magic show and chocolate tastings.

Sirotkin's managing partner Hanna Loeffler emphasized that the event is not just a celebration of Adagio, but also the broader Middlebury community.

"It's a huge thank you for supporting us, for accepting us, for including us, for welcoming us into this business community in downtown Middlebury," Loeffler added.

The name 'Adagio' is derived from Italian, meaning "slowly" or "at a slow tempo" in music. Sirotkin said that this concept reflects the store's philosophy: to encourage customers to slow down, savor each chocolate and appreciate its origins and stories, much like enjoying the movements of a musical composition. Chocolates from the same manufacturer can taste different depending on the origin of the cacao beans, inviting customers to focus and savor the subtle variations.

Sirotkin is a seasoned chocolate curator with a career in the food business spanning more than 50 years whose passion for chocolate began in childhood, fueled by a sweet tooth inherited from his father. As a boy, he would scavenge alleys for bottles to return for deposits, using the money to satisfy his chocolate cravings.

"I used to nibble chocolate chips that my mom stored in a bag for making cakes," Sirotkin said. "And little did I know that my Dad did the same thing so my Mom would yell at him for stealing the chocolate chips, and he couldn't say he wasn't, but he didn't understand why there were so many gone, because I was doing it."

Before founding Adagio, Sirotkin established food co-ops in Michigan, ran a restaurant in Upstate New York, and founded Green River Chocolates in Hinesburg, Vt.

Although a stage four colon cancer diagnosis in 2007 forced him into retirement, his passion for chocolate persisted. Even while retired, Sirotkin continued to acquire chocolates from various distributors. His wife, Jackie Earle-Cruickshanks, described having a closet full of chocolates stashed in their home.

When he relocated to Middlebury during the pandemic, Sirotkin envisioned weaving chocolate into the fabric of the local community. He first contacted nearby businesses with proposals to showcase chocolates in a section of the store. When those efforts did not materialize, Sirotkin's vision of opening his own chocolate shop took shape.

COURTESY PHOTO / ADAGIO CHOCOLATES
The diverse array of cacao beans that make up Adagio Chocolates have origins across the world.

However, Sirotkin attributes the realization of his vision to Loeffler. Their paths first crossed while they were both involved in the Middlebury Film Festival . Loeffler recalls being taken by surprise when Sirotkin called in December 2023 with the idea of opening a chocolate shop, as she had expected the call to be related to the film festival.

"She just brings a great attitude towards the whole project of, 'We can just do it,' 'Oh, we can do this. Okay, let's just go and set this up,'" Sirotkin explained.

For Loeffler, launching a chocolate shop in Middlebury was a no-brainer, given the town's lack of stores specializing in high-quality chocolates.

"There was a little bit of a thought on his part of, 'Oh, you know, we'll open this at some point, you know, when I come back, etcetera.' And then this space became available. And I said, 'This space is too good to pass up. We need this space,'" Loeffler said.

After acquiring the space, renovation for the store took off and the business soft-launched in May of this year.

All ticket sales for the grand opening next Friday will be donated to flood relief efforts in Vermont, where catastrophic summer rainfall has severely impacted local farmers. This cause holds special significance for Adagio as cacao harvesting is incredibly labor-intensive. Each cacao flower blooms for just one day before wilting and less than 10% of these flowers are actually pollinated. As a result, many farmers resort to hand pollination to ensure a successful harvest.

"There's a farmer behind that bar of chocolate, a farmer who has skills, a farmer who's dependent on things outside of his control for him to be able to have a car, to be able to feed his family," Loeffler said.

For Sirotkin, there is a unique and profound connection between magic and chocolate: they both stretch the boundaries of the human senses.

"You can travel the world here, and you're just in Middlebury, and chocolate sort of takes you also on a journey through different places," Sirtokin said. "They both make you feel better in this way that you can't explain. Fooled by this wonder of chocolate; it just tickles you in a way, and magic too when suddenly this card appears."

Sirotkin and Loeffler are looking forward to working with one another on the creative process of running a business, and continuing to learn about chocolate.

"It's been absolutely incredible to be given an opportunity to create something and to be able to work with someone like Allan, who's so passionate about what he does, but also someone who is humble and down to earth enough to recognize that it doesn't always have to be his way," Loeffler said.

THE OPERA COMPANY OF MIDDLEBURY NAMES NEW MANAGING DIRECTOR, REFLECTS ON 20 YEARS OF PROGRESS

By KATRINA SCHWARZ
Local Editor

The Opera Company of Middlebury (OCM) hired Robin Allen LaPlante as their new Managing Director in August. The organization is taking this change in leadership as an opportunity to reflect on their progress and goals after 20 years of programming and productions in Middlebury's Town Hall Theater. While Middlebury is rarely the locale that comes to mind when one thinks of the opera — an art form usually associated with bustling cities such as New York and Vienna — OCM has managed to create opportunities for the local community to enjoy and appreciate its value.

LaPlante comes to OCM after a 20-year career dedicated to art and music. After working for a variety of organizations including NPR's From the Top, Boston Center for the Arts, Highland Center for the Arts, Circus Smirkus and Vermont Youth Orchestra, she became a consultant working with arts and education nonprofits to create and perfect marketing and fundraising strategies.

When the Managing Director position opened up, LaPlante saw an opportunity to dig into another arts organization and share the story of the impact of their programming with engaged audiences.

"It's an amazing collaborative team with a lot of passion for the programs and the work that we are doing," she said. "My role is to take that passion and focus it."

Founded in 2004 by artists Douglas Anderson, Carol Christensen, Beth Thompson, Meredith Parsons McComb and Greg Vitercik, OCM has enjoyed 20 years of fantastic productions held in Middlebury's Town Hall Theater. They began as a small operation but have since expanded both their performance schedule and community outreach programs. OCM has received commendation from prestigious publications, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Opera News.

Mary Longey, Executive Producer of OCM, described the growth of the program to The Campus.

"We kind of just did it a step at a time," Longey said. "We did one opera in May and June, and a few years later we added a fall opera and then we added the Young Artist Program. We have now merged with the Youth Opera Company of Vermont, so we have really grown."

OCM has put effort into educating and enriching young minds in the community surrounding Middlebury, especially after merging with the Youth Opera Company (YOC). The YOC offers a plethora of opportunities and events for young singers by partnering with schools, offering training programs and creating singing-centered community service opportunities.

The Company provides a variety of programs in order to accomplish their goal, including their Young Artists Program and Opera Under 26. The Young Artists program provides a travel and housing stipend for young singers and pianists to hone their skills under instruction from OCM faculty, while Opera Under 26 allows people under 26 to attend OCM's performances for free.

LaPlante believes that OCM stands out amongst other programs, as it works to involve its audience in the inner workings of the opera.

"One of the things that I think is so unique about the organization is that it provides an opportunity to really get up close and personal because it's such an intimate space," LaPlante said. "You are really able to see every bit of the energy from these performers, every bit of their reaction, every part of the production. As an organization, we are constantly finding ways to bring in our audience closer and give them opportunities to meet these singers that are from all around the country."

"There's this legacy, this history, of creating these amazing productions in Middlebury that the community has come to love and is part of the fabric," Laplanete said. "With the organization bringing in these educational programs like the Youth Opera Company as well as continuing the Young Artists Programs, there is opportunity to build and engage more people in the region."

In alignment with the work being done by the Opera Company at Middlebury, LaPlante mentions her experience working with youth as a highlight of her career.

"What's important to me about that kind of work, working with youth in arts, is that focus on the future of art audiences and art performances, and what it looks like as we move forward. The arts hold a mirror to our culture and our society," noted LaPlante.

Middlebury students are able to be a part of OCM's Opera Under 26 program by attending the upcoming production of Scalia/Ginsburg, taking place from Oct. 4–6. The piece explores the friendship between Supreme Court Justices Ruth Bader Gindeburg and Anton Scalia.

COURTESY PHOTO / THE OPERA COMPANY OF MIDDLEBURY
The Opera Company of Middlebury (OCM) offers opportunities for college students to get involved in its productons

I PLEAD THE FIRST!

By LUCY SCHEMBRE
Opinion Editor

Charlie Deichman-Caswell / The Middlebury Campus

The Gaza Solidarity Encampment occupied McCullough lawn for eight days last spring before coming to an agreement with college administrators.

Two weeks before Middlebury College opened its doors for the 2024–25 academic year, students received a lengthy email from lead administrators clarifying their policy on open expression. The message, sent on Aug. 29, began with an acknowledgement of the school"s interest in its connection to ongoing international affairs, specifically naming the war in Israel and Gaza. Quickly, though, the authors narrowed the focus of the message to concentrate on how students are permitted or not permitted to express their beliefs on campus. While continued dialogue between Middlebury's administration and student body is critical as we attempt to better understand Middlebury's role in the global community, the message places undue constraints on student protests, and includes veiled critiques of last year's demonstrations that call into question the extent to which the school truly seeks to protect students' right to express their beliefs.

Towards the end of the administration's message are six newly clarified components of the Open Expression policy. To start, the college reserves the right to determine the "time, place and manner" of protests, in the interest of "sustainably" apportioning its resources. Essentially, Middlebury reserves the right to prevent or significantly alter this type of student expression if it is deemed "unsustainable." This subjective term offers administrators significant freedom in denying or approving protests on a case-by-case basis. It also significantly reduces students' freedom to express their beliefs in the "manner" they choose. In using the term "sustainable" rather than "safe," the college reserves the right to limit student advocacy even when there is no threat to the safety of anyone on campus, which is very troubling.

Even more explicitly, the message prohibits any demonstration that causes "substantial disruption to academic activities and essential business operations." This indicates the school's commitment to protect the freedom of expression for only those protesters who do not threaten the college's operational status quo. Obviously, the college prefers to decide for itself when its policies should change. But, I believe that a school committed to supporting "sustainable" free expression and critical thinking in and outside of the classroom should not be threatened by, and would do well to actively encourage, impassioned calls for reform from non-violent student demonstrators.

Last spring, Middlebury students — myself included — organized by Student Justice for Palestine (SJP) held demonstrations to raise awareness about the disproportionate violence of the Israeli government toward the Palestinian people and to push Middlebury to reexamine some of its pedagogical and financial practices in light of the war. The encampment, similar to others across U.S. college campuses, occupied a central and highly visible space on a quad lawn.

"They want protests to be controlled by the terms they set," SJP President Merih Etgü '26 wrote to me in an email regarding the leadership team's recent communication. He went on to write that if Middlebury were fully dedicated to protecting free speech, they would not restrict things such as where posters can be displayed or the number of people allowed to table outside dining halls.

The leadership team lauded student activists for conducting "demonstrations, protests, vigils, and teach-ins…with care and respect," but were quick to assert that in the future, activism "must be sustainable." They claimed the deployment of additional resources to support student expression last spring caused intense "emotional, psychological" and "physical" fatigue among staff and faculty. Through this generalization, the leadership team denied its employees, many of whom actually "volunteered" to work with students, the agency to present their own experience. Supporting open expression should not place undue pressure on staff and faculty, and it remains primarily Middlebury's responsibility to consistently provide employees with satisfactory working conditions..

Finally, in the interest of recognizing Middlebury's acknowledged connection to global conflict, we must remember that there is nothing less sustainable than war and terror. In May of last year, the Student Government Association (SGA) released a referendum to assess the student body's opinion on four points concerning the alteration of Middlebury investment practices. Over 70% of students on campus last spring voted in the referendum. Notably, 90.5% of respondents indicated their support of full financial transparency on current and future Middlebury investments, 82.9% supported divestment from arms manufacturing companies, and 82.7% supported divestment from all forms of war profiteering. In light of a significant portion of the student body expressing an interest in reforming Middlebury's investment practices, perhaps the next message from administration could provide an update on divestment negotiations.

By assuming near-total control over the location, manner, and scope of student protests, the school dramatically limits students' ability to press our institution toward reforming those practices we find unfair, unjust, or simply ineffective. In the spirit of free and open expression, as well as education, I encourage all members of this Middlebury community to continue thinking critically not only within explicitly academic settings, but to consider our institution and the world outside of it with an equal amount of skepticism.

ACROSS THE POND:
Looking at Britain from America

By YUVRAJ SHAH
Opinion Editor

Yuvraj Shah / The Middlebury Campus

The view at Primrose Hill, London.

I never expected to end up in the United States. When researching and applying to universities, the U.S. seemed like the last place on my list. However, two and a half years later I find myself here, in America. I moved here thinking I would learn about the U.S. But now I can say with confidence that moving to the U.S. has taught me more about Britain than my life in Britain itself did.

I grew up immersed in the British Commonwealth. The U.S. seemed culturally similar, yet at the same time, so different. I remembered learning that it was once a British colony, founded by the people who governed my home in Britain. But this didn't seem logical. How could the U.S., with all its cultural strength, its music and media permeating everyone's childhood, have been founded by my countrymen and countrywomen?

America always served as the final frontier. Before moving here, it looked like a massive homogenous monolith. A political, economic and social power. A military giant. It was difficult for me to understand its identity beyond its power projection. However, as Britain proceeded down the route of its slow conversion to Washington's European vassal state, moving to the U.S. began to appeal to me as I explored my potential university path.

In retrospect, it seems strange that I would not have considered America to be more than what it projected globally. I somehow never conjectured that a country around 4000% bigger than Britain, with a population nearly four times larger than that of the U.K. would have vastly different cultures, experiences and people living within its borders. Barring my understanding of New York (Manhattan, to be specific), and California (Los Angeles, to be specific), the rest of U.S. culture seemed incomprehensible and distant.

I remember my first month in Vermont. I sent my family photos of Walmart, enchantingly large highways and all the varieties of plant-based milk I saw in the supermarkets. I was almost shocked by the difference between Vermont and what I had seen of New York City on television. Was this the same country?

Economically, I began to understand how much the U.S. and Britain differed. The average yearly salary for an American is $63,795. The average yearly salary for a Brit is £33,500 (or roughly $43,000). If Britain were to join the United States as the 51st state, it would have an income per capita lower than that of Mississippi. It feels almost sacrilegious for me to admit, but the U.S. is the country that Britain sought to become. How did two nations, so culturally similar, end up with unrecognizably different economies?

I believe that after the fall of the British Empire, Britain should have gone in a different direction. Mass construction, investment in infrastructure, a housing boom. Instead, we were plagued by NIMBY (not in my back yard) activism and a fascination with our old identity of empire, one that has not been shed. Only when I was able to leave Britain, could I see what was going wrong.

When I interact with Americans, there remains a symbolic strength of Britain. Our cultural heritage can never be denied. Even in the modern era, the popularity of the Spice Girls, the 2012 London Olympics and the craze of One Direction point to Britain's relevance in the anglosphere. I have a working list of British vocabulary that is not used here: chips, loo, lift, jumper, cinema. People grin at the sound of these words. Did you know the word for "billboard'" is typically "hoarding" in England?

However, while we may be culturally relevant, as I examine Britain from afar, I believe we are fading in economic relevance. On the 23rd of June 2016 (or June 23rd as one may say in the U.S.), Britain tragically voted to leave the European Union. Maybe this would be our chance to somehow reconnect with the rest of the former Empire, I thought. Canada, Australia, South Africa, India, Kenya and, of course, the U.S. Maybe they would look at us, and, with feelings of nostalgia, bring us back into their fold. But as Barack Obama once told then British Prime Minister David Cameron, Brexit would put Britain at the "back of the queue" for any potential U.S. trade deal.

Moving to the U.S. has given me a new perspective on my home country. I believe the modern British State should be studied and examined more. Not only by those of us who call it home, but as global economic power shifts away from the West, by anyone looking to see how to keep their countries afloat. Britain's unfortunate economic downturn is a warning of what can happen if a country does not allow its national identity to change.

Yet, even as I gaze across the ocean, I recognise the U.S. is very far from perfect. I spent my first summer here this past June and July. I miss the train system in London. I miss British pub culture. I miss not needing to own a car. I miss using Celsius, and even with its many issues, I miss our free healthcare. But, I believe that it took me moving to the U.S. to really understand the future that Britain is hurtling towards.

So until Britain rejoins the European Union — something I can only hope for — I go into my junior year excited to continue living in America, while quietly reflecting on an ever-changing Britain. I have 19 months left on my visa. Until I have to cross the bridge to my post grad life, I will continue to plow through my American bucket list. Britain will wait for my return. What's next in America? Costco. I have to try a rotisserie chicken.

THE REAL PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE: LAURIE PATTON'S SUCCCESSOR

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

Susanna Schatz

In January 2025, after almost 10 years at the college, President Laurie Patton will step down from her post to become President of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Dean of Language Schools Stephen Snyder will serve as interim president this coming spring, with the Board of Trustees and presidential search committee hoping to have named the 18th president by February 2025. Board of Trustees Chair Ted Truscott has previously shared that the Board is hoping for a president who represents a continuity of President Patton's tenure rather than a change in policy.

As the presidential search committee looks to find the institution's next president, we believe that it should prioritize candidates who form genuine connections with students, understand the unique importance of the local area and Vermont, and have bold solutions to the challenges facing Middlebury and higher education — challenges that have not been fully addressed under Patton's tenure.

Patton is routinely spotted walking around campus with her two dogs, and frequently stops to chat with students she knows and those she has never met before. Though her ability to directly engage with the student body is limited by the demands of her administrative role, she has reserved time to hold open office hours and teach half-credit courses in the Religion department. The next president doesn't need to be a fan of Great Pyrenees or spirituality, but they should prioritize leaving the boundaries of Old Chapel and entering the rhythms of everyday life at Middlebury, whether that be in the halls of the Mahaney Arts Center, the stacks of Davis Library or along the bleachers lining the athletic fields.

Patton has focused significant efforts towards fundraising with the launch of the "For Every Future" campaign in October 2023. She has overseen the raising of $465 million as of this September, exceeding the previously established goals this summer by over $50 million. These funds will expand opportunities for Middlebury students in a variety of ways; we expect that the new president of Middlebury will need to be both skilled in raising money and in allocating the funds of this lucrative campaign to the areas that will most closely benefit us as students. The $40 million unrestricted donation from last spring has not been publicly allocated yet. Why not ask each candidate how they would spend that money as a test of their priorities and decision-making abilities?

Speaking of making difficult decisions, Patton saw several challenges under her tenure, including the Charles Murray incident in 2017, dissolution of the Commons system, the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, chronic understaffing and a decline in the student body's diversity. Whether or not these challenges are direct results of her administration is unknown; the Board of Trustees has more power than some students may realize in creating and implementing such policies. Yet if at times the institution felt rudderless this past decade, drifting along into slow decline as wages stagnated, services stalled and tuition rose, that will be her legacy too.

We hope a new president will bring vitality and creativity to the greatest challenges facing our college, yet we acknowledge not all of their decisions will be easy or popular. Give us a president who can take accountability for these tough calls and justify them to the student body — we want to know what our student activity fees pay for, why juniors are still living in Hepburn doubles and how the college plans to protect our mental health. We do not care as much about the so-called "Big M" or the international reputation Middlebury seeks for itself. The next president should be a fierce advocate for the Vermont campus and the overwhelming majority of students at the college who study here and pay tuition here.

We'd also like to see the new president focus on strengthening the relationship between the college and the town of Middlebury and Vermont on the whole. Under Patton, the college has funded two major new housing developments in the town of Middlebury, a crucial act given the shortage of affordable housing in Vermont and the resultant understaffing at the college. We believe the new president must bring a similar vision that cares about our relationship with Addison County, whether that is investing in local childcare and housing or weighing how to best use thousands of acres of college-owned land here.

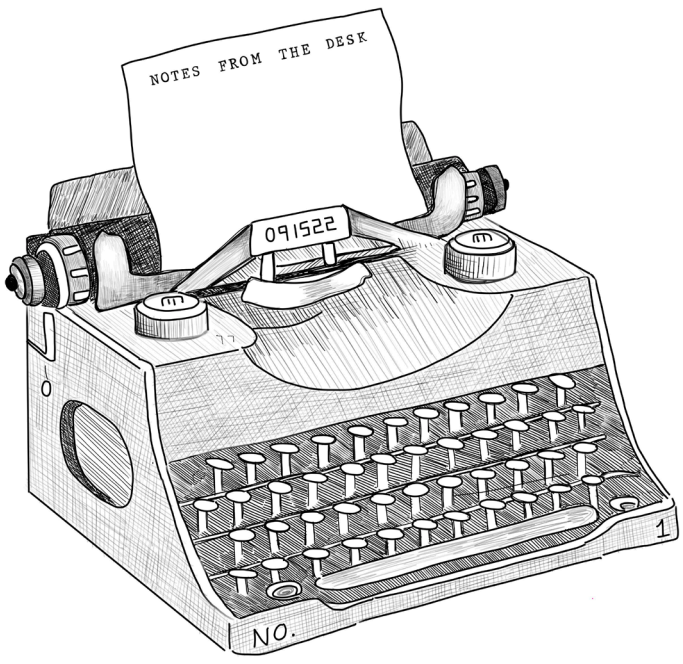
Last Friday, Board of Trustees Chair Ted Truscott sent the Middlebury community an email announcing the decision to appoint Synder as interim president. This message was initially relayed that morning to faculty at Bread Loaf and then to staff on the main campus before the mass email reached the rest of the community, which included all students. It is unfortunate that such a decision made students feel like an afterthought in the process, rather than an important constituency. We appreciate the surveys seeking student feedback on our ideal qualities of a new president, but as the ones paying tuition and ultimately receiving our diplomas here, we hope that both our voices and ears will be prioritized throughout the search and by our new president.

We understand that to be the president of a college or university right now is no easy task, and requires inserting yourself into the front lines of the ongoing struggle for higher education. We commend those seeking to lead and represent universities when many institutions are facing amplified pressure and scrutiny from critics and donors in recent years.

Patton's successor must be up to the challenge of not only articulating the importance of a Middlebury education in the 21st century, but doing so with resolve when it is most important, and most necessary.

Notes From the Desk: Turning a new page

By RYAN McELROY, COLE CHAUDHARI & MADELEINE KAPTEIN
Editor in Chief & Managing Editors



Dear Middlebury,

Welcome back to the college's only student-run weekly newspaper, The Campus!

The three of us are writing to you as the new Executive Team for this year, and we're excited as ever to be among the incredible group of student journalists and editors that comprise The Campus' staff.

After many members of our staff who had been here for four years graduated last May, we have hired over a dozen new editors to fill their shoes. Our talented and enthusiastic staff has worked diligently this past week through move-in and the start of classes to bring you this first issue.

We'll be hiring even more this fall — any student can email campus@middlebury.edu to apply to work on our layout, online, photography and visuals, or communications teams.

We hope you'll join us this year on staff or as readers as the newspaper continues its coverage of major events and cultural shifts. Last year, our paper reported on how large world events made their way to our corner of Vermont. We wrote about the shooting of three Palestinian students in Burlington and later on the Gaza Solidarity Encampment on Middlebury's own McCullough lawn and its accompanying student protests and eventual dissolution.

We were also busy investigating unprecedented spending of the Middlebury College Activities Board (MCAB), the events of the stabbing on College Street that occurred during spring break, and the resignation announcement of college President Laurie Patton and the launch of a search for a new president to take her place.

Our goal is to bring you reliable, accurate information about everything from misused student funds to local businesses.

It was a defining moment in Middlebury history as we chronicled how students, staff, locals and travelers watched and celebrated the Great North American Eclipse in April from our sought-after path of totality. The paper recounted the journey of the group of students that climbed the Snow Bowl enough times to reach Mount Everest's distance above sea level to raise money for humanitarian aid in Gaza and record-breaking alumni who dominated athletic competitions.

We enter into this academic year in the midst of several major transitions, ranging from our physical environment — the construction of a new first year residence hall, fresh tennis courts and the upcoming renovation of Proctor Dining Hall — to a changing student demographic, the final semester of President Laurie Patton's tenure here and the arrival of her successor in the spring.

As a newspaper, we will monitor and report on these developments regularly and with precision, and we also hope to serve as a fixed point of constancy and direction for Middlebury throughout these changes. We will also be covering the presidential election in November by running a special election issue, similar to our staff issue last April which highlighted the voices, frustrations and talents of college employees.

A crucial component of The Campus as a publication is accepting and publishing op-eds from members of our community. Last year, our peers and classmates submitted op-eds on topics including the impending powers of AI and their implications for higher education, Vermont's quiet culpability in preventing smoother transitions to renewable energy, the need for supporting a local bond vote on the Ilsley Public Library renovations and the ever-alluring, ever-vexing specter of what to do once graduation has come and gone. We encourage you — whether you are a student, staff member, faculty member or an alumnus — to submit op-eds to The Campus, and to think of our opinions section as a space for respectful and robustly constructed arguments.

The Editorial Board allowed us to speak with one voice on the defining issues of last year: student protests, staff compensation, housing shortages and student death, among others. Where else on campus can a group of 25 students with wide-ranging interests and experiences meet to debate controversial issues at Middlebury? We plan to focus on continuing news stories such as the search for Middlebury's 18th president (see above for our thoughts on that this week) and breaking news as it unfolds this fall. We will stand by our editorial decisions, even when controversial.

Our annual Zeitgeist survey allows the Middlebury community to see beyond what's observable on the surface and into the real experiences of the people that comprise the college. In last year's survey, Zeitgeist 6.0, we found that 65% of survey respondents admitted to breaking the Honor Code, and that 48% of respondents felt like they didn't exemplify a "typical" Middlebury student; we (and all of you, we're certain) are curious to see how these results change after this year's survey.

Though The Campus intends on sustaining the coverage of pressing, serious and transformative events within our college and the broader Middlebury community, we hope to keep the pages of this paper equally receptive to fun, lighthearted journalism of all stripes. Maybe you'll weigh in on your favorite musician's latest album, review a Middlebury Discount Comedy performance in the Hepburn Zoo, do a deep-dive on a new local cafe or let us know what your favorite films are for geology majors.

And if you're not so keen on writing for us, we hope that you will continue to pick up print copies of our paper at the entrance to Proctor or on the way to class on Thursday mornings. After all, what is a newspaper without its readers?

The Middlebury Campus

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The Middlebury Campus

BRATting for the fences

By NORAH KHAN
Arts & Culture Editor

COURTESY PHOTO
*The iconic, minimalist album cover for "*BRAT"

The signature block of lime green and low-resolution Arial font has defined these past few months for many. British artist Charli XCX dominated the charts this summer with the release of her sixth studio album, "BRAT." Known for her boundary-pushing hyperpop stylings, XCX's album explores the heavy thumping noises of underground clubs just as much as it does the nuances of vulnerable topics like freedom, grief, jealousy and self-worth.

Released by Atlantic Records on June 7, the album debuted at No. 2 on the official UK album chart, No.3 on the Billboard 200 in the U.S and received an 8.6 out of 10 on Pitchfork. My younger sister had a "BRAT" themed birthday celebration. Apparently, even former President Barack Obama has listened to the album. Included in his annual summer playlist was the final track, "365."

Here's my breakdown of the album:

The album begins with the bouncy and bright pop anthem, "360," which sets a high bar for the rest of the record. The music video is studded with internet it-girls like actresses Julia Fox and Chloë Sevigny. Second is "Club Classic" which, you guessed it, lives up to its title. The song sounds straight out of a dark and loud NYC club packed with partygoers and pays homage to XCX and her friends' status as urban club icons.

"Sympathy is a Knife" is my favorite track off the entire album. The lyrics are bleak and depressing, but somehow XCX manages to create a track true to her hyperpop roots. Themes of self-doubt, the pressure to succeed under public opinion and feigned sympathy dig into XCX as she tries to discern the authentic from the disingenuous.

"I might say something stupid" is a quiet song that sees Charli questioning her place in the world as seen in lyrics like, "'Cause I don't know if I belong here anymore, I." This melancholy melody is followed by "Talk talk," a flirty tune directed toward the singer's fiancé George Daniel, the drummer for the British pop band The 1975.

"Von dutch" follows up with a chorus that toys with its jealous adherents. Lyrics like "It's alright to admit that I'm the fantasy, You're obsessing, just confess it, put your hands up" address onlookers who can't help but envy the speaker.

"Everything is romantic" slows down from the artificiality of the modern world to focus on the small things in life that bring joy. In this song, 'romantic' takes on a platonic meaning to describe winding roads and white sheets.

"Rewind" finds XCX reminiscing about her life and how her perceptions and anxieties have changed. She used to paint her toes in her bedroom and listen to CDs but now constantly thinks about her body image and the suffocating weight of commercial success. Brimming with 1980's-esque synth-pop, the song almost feels like a love letter to the naïvety of the early online era when things weren't so complicated.

"So I" is about the late singer and revolutionary producer, SOPHIE. SOPHIE was a transgender woman who worked with a wide range of artists and is viewed as a boundary-changing icon in the LGBTQ+ community. She was a close collaborator and friend of XCX for many years until her death in 2021. The song explores the shame XCX felt about not building her relationship with the producer outside of the studio. "I didn't feel like I was magical enough for this unbelievably magic person. And that makes me ashamed now I don't have the opportunity to experience that anymore, because she's gone," XCX said in an interview. The song sounds very emotionally charged, with drawn-out melodies and soft vocals that invoke a sad feeling deep in my gut.

On "Girl, so confusing" XCX talks about the complexities of female friendships and existing in the music industry as a female artist. Some speculated that the track was about Kiwi artist Lorde, who later appeared on the remix. On the track "Apple", XCX discusses the pains of familial relationships. The meaning of the lyrics isn't hard to discern and the fruit allegory is cleverly constructed. The upbeat bouncy beat coupled with the lyrics which analyze XCX's relationship growing up with her Indian and English parents.

For me, "B2b" is nothing to yell about. It feels like a step up from your basic pop song and nothing more. "Mean girls" has an unexpected piano interlude that sounds like an ice cream truck or sitcom theme song. However, "I think about it all the time" strikes a different chord. It is the most stripped-down song on the album. The track is in stark contrast to the heavy autotune and instrumental backing of the other songs. Most of the melody comes from humming and soft vocals. XCX reflects on what it's like to be friends with people who have children and how those relationships fluctuate after the fact. She questions her freedom and if her career is really the most important thing in her future – it's an existential moment for the singer and feels almost like an intimate notes app entry. "I think about it all the time" is an abrupt but awesome leeway into the closing track,"365," which sounds like a revamped version of "360". It plays upon the same themes and sounds and is a fitting way to end the album, kind of like the last song played at a party while people are leaving.

"BRAT" has permeated a barrier that few artists can touch — the album has become a popular aesthetic objective in and of itself. XCX describes the "BRAT" fashion as somewhat trashy: "Just like a pack of cigs and a Bic lighter. And like, a strappy white top with no bra," she said in an interview with the BBC's Sidetracked Podcast. I also perceived the messiness to serve as a disruption of the curated and "clean girl aesthetic" that is often seen online.

It is clear that Charli XCX constantly pushes the boundaries of pop music. She doesn't allow formulas and duplicate chords to define the extent of her music. The singer has always been non-conformist – when she was 14, the Essex-born singer would reportedly go to raves to perform music till the early hours of the morning with her parents tagging along, which is almost kind of cool?

Listening to each song together almost feels like XCX is taking all of her insecurities, complex thoughts and vulnerabilities and smashing them into bits. With gossipy lyrics and a sweaty club flair, "BRAT" is one of my top albums of the year. While "BRAT" summer may technically be over, this is definitely an album I will be playing repeatedly for years to come.

MIDDLEBURY PERFORMING ARTS SERIES: PREVIEWING FALL 2024

By CATHERINE GOODRICH
Senior Arts & Culture Editor

COURTESY PHOTO
The fall 2024 Performing Arts Series Lineup

A mainstay of the Middlebury arts scene, the Performing Arts Series is back for its 105th season with a lineup as rich as it is varied. From classical chamber music to modern dance, there is something to compel everyone to make a trip to the Mahaney Arts Center (MAC) this fall. The Performing Arts Series has long allowed students, professors and community members to enjoy first-class, diverse arts programming as a collective. With classes underway and back-to-school antics in full swing, don't forget to include these fabulously curated events while marking up your calendars this syllabus week.

To start the season, the all-women ensemble Sophie Shao and Friends will perform a program of sonatas and piano trios at Middlebury on September 28. Pianist Christina Dahl and two-time Grammy-nominated violinist Jennifer Frautschi will join Shao, a cellist, for an evening of musical performance. Shao is a celebrated favorite of the Performing Arts Series and helmed the chamber music performance commemorating composer Sergei Rachmaninoff this past April.

The following week, the musical duo Bala Bila will showcase the intercultural harmonies of West and East African stylings. Balla Kouyate, hailing from Mali, will be playing the balafon, calabash and bass guitar and Matchume Zango from Mozambique will be on the timbila, mbira and percussion. Kouyate and Zango will be performing in an intimate, living-room-style concert sure to highlight their skills as composers and multi-instrumentalists.

Next up, the four-man ensemble Sō Percussion, in collaboration with Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Caroline Shaw, will be performing on Oct. 25 for a Middlebury debut that is not to be missed. Sō Percussion was founded in 1999 at the Yale School of Music and is acclaimed by The New Yorker as having maintained an "exhilarating blend of precision and anarchy, rigor and bedlam." The concert will feature songs from Sō's co-composed albums with Shaw and is also set to include Middlebury percussion students to join Sō on stage for a portion of the performance.

The season's midway point is marked by the return of the renowned Jerusalem Quartet on Nov. 3. Celebrating their 30th season, the Jerusalem Quartet will be performing a program featuring the works of Haydn, Shostakovich and Dvorák. The group has enjoyed international acclaim for a caliber of technical precision and interpretive depth that continues to elevate the string quartet tradition.

On Nov. 15 and 16, Emmy award-winning choreographer and dancer Sean Dorsey is bringing his newest piece, "The Lost Art of Dreaming" to the MAC. Dorsey's reputation precedes him, with awards ranging from Emmies to Goldies and an impressive educational career committed to an explicitly trans-positive pedagogy. "The Lost Art of Dreaming" will make for an evening of personal storytelling performed by a five-person ensemble of trans, queer and gender-non-conforming dancers.

To round out the fall series, jazz extraordinaire Bria Skonberg will return to Middlebury with a seasonally apt program entitled "Jingle Bell Swing." The concert will include her hit cover of "All I Want For Christmas is You," showcasing the artist's signature smoky vocals and New Orleans-style trumpet flair. Skonberg sold out the MAC almost a decade ago and Middlebury will be lucky enough to have her back on Dec. 4.

Looking ahead to J-Term, the ensemble Choral Chameleon will perform a dynamic, mixed-repertoire concert on Jan. 18 and will hold an additional performance alongside students on Jan. 22. Defined by their adventuresome spirit and experimentative verve, Choral Chameleon champions new and unexpected combinations of music. The group will be making a triumphant return to Middlebury after a recent sound bath concert performance in the fall of 2022. The group is led by founding artistic director Vince Peterson, who has written a new composition just for Middlebury, so these two events are a must-see.

If last year's Performing Arts Series looked enticing, the Middlebury community is in for a treat with the selection the MAC has chosen to follow up their previous season. There are rising stars, beloved favorites and anticipated debuts to look forward to amid classes and campus hustle and bustle. And if you're feeling inclined to write about any of these performances, our line is always open…

A passage between silence and music

By COLE CHAUDHARI
Managing Editor

On Aug. 25, 2023, the American musician and collegiate debate coach Brian McBride died, and with his passing the world lost one-half of Stars of the Lid, an ambient drone duo formed in Austin, Texas in the early 1990s.

McBride and Adam Wiltzie, his collaborator, released their first record, "Music for Nitrous Oxide," early in the summer of 1995, and their final album came out in late 2007, titled "Carte de Viste." Spanning the dozen years between the bookends of their career as partners, the duo delivered six albums with one coming out every year between 1995 and 1999 and then a two-year pause to 2001, and then another hiatus until 2007.

Their album titles display a playful self-awareness of their project and its seeming rejection of a serious formal commitment, which range from the bizarrely metaphysical — "Gravitational Pull vs. The Desire for an Aquatic Life" (1996) — to the forthrightly introspective and self-betraying, as "The Tired Sounds of Stars of the Lid" (2001) and "And Their Refinement of The Decline" (2007) figure as the respective names of their sixth and seventh records.

COURTESY PHOTO / NPR

Brian McBride.

Their song titles, like their album names, are blissfully unafraid to hop registers or to pirouette between the allusive, the tenderly loving, the poetic and the strange; "Gravitational Pull" begins with "The Better Angels of Our Nation", an oft-excerpted phrase coined by Abraham Lincoln, includes "Cantus; in Memory of Warren Wiltzie" and ends with the yearner's plead of "Be Little With Me."

In the years just after the millennium, Wiltzie and McBride continued with their free-formed nominative assignments. "And Their Refinement" — widely considered to be their magnum opus — provides 18 tracks and a Scorsesean runtime of two hours, which traverses the listener across, among others, the exemplary poetic numbers of "The Evil That Never Arrived" and "Even If You're Never Awake", through the plainly labeled "Another Ballad for Heavy Lids", to the ars poetica-esque "The Daughters of Quiet Minds" and, finally, home at the end with the hilarious "December Hunting for Vegetarian Fuckface."

The music under these titles — and that of much of the ambient drone genre writ large — cannot be said to possess any of the technical or structural features that constitute a conventional song; to call their work "music" feels almost woefully, consequentially imprecise. What it eschews in rhythm, beat, sampling and the whole standard architecture of verse-chorus-verse-bridge-chorus-outro, it receives from a breathtaking treasury of texture and noise, where time is deliberately unordered, in stark contrast to the metered measurements of most other songs you hear.

Their work (noise? listening experiences?) does not correspond to a set of reproducible physical actions: you can't drum a steering wheel to it or strum along on an invisible air guitar. This is all by design. The genre is, after all, called "ambient" because the sound is intent on surrounding the listener on all sides, fashioning a novel (land/color)scape rather than making deliberate incursions into an existing one. The only comparable physical action is meditation, or maybe standing in a crater on the moon.

We hear things in kinship with ambient music in our everyday lives: the fan blowing in the next room; the hum of a microwave; the intent bustle of city life through an open window; a plane overhead; the air speeding past us as we drive quietly at night. The discography of Stars of the Lid attempts to recompose these steady fixtures of common experience into expansive, world-building tracks and records, where the industrial hums of real machines are refracted by and into the weary inhales and exhales of lush synthesizers, distant horns, spacey guitars, and shimmering strings. If shoegaze, as a subgenre, offered the trajectory of alternative rock an avenue into a more noise-focused, effects-focused discipline while still retaining the core features of the broader genre, then the same can be said about what ambient drone offered electronic music: a palette of stacked textures through a digression into soundscape, the possibilizing of one harmony sustained for an amazing six or 13 or 20 minutes.

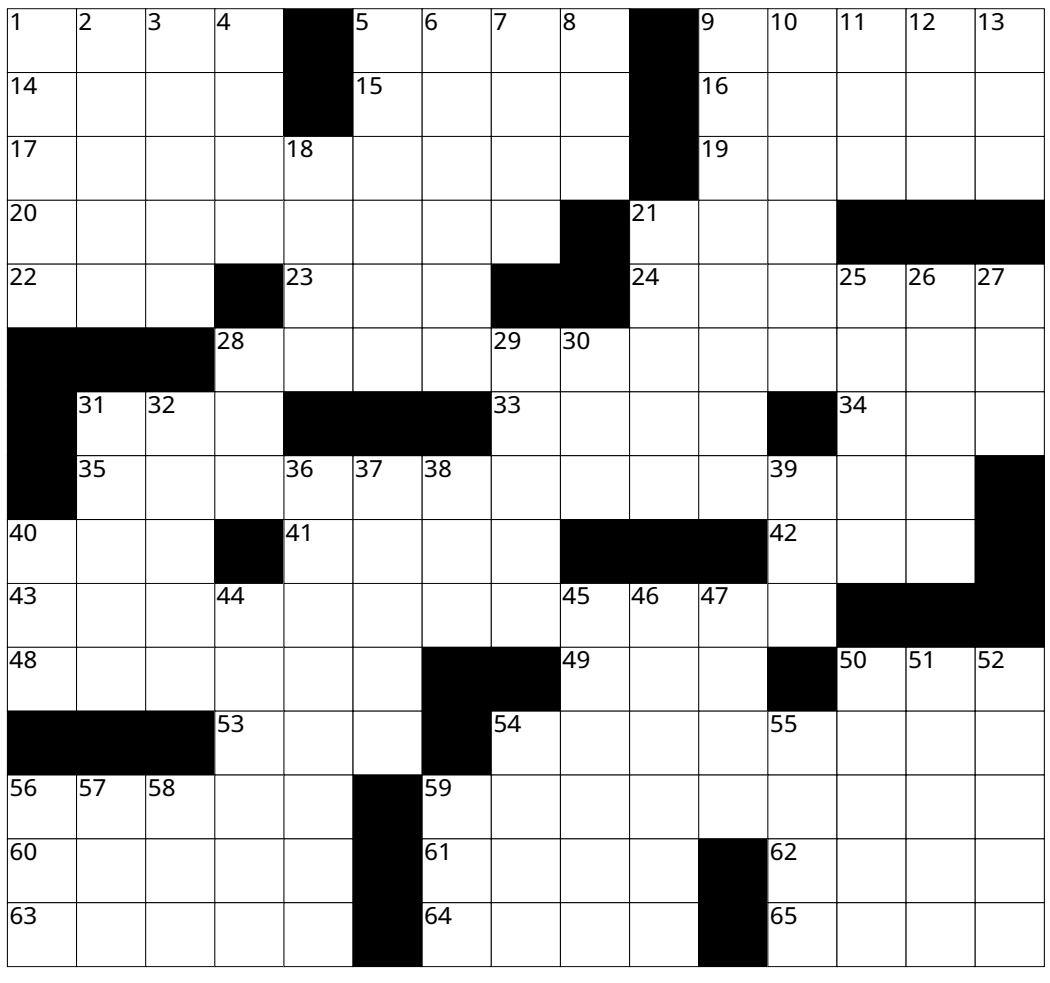
With McBride's passing now over a year behind us, the albums of Stars of the Lid gain a special resonance. There is no chance of the duo making more music, or of Stars of the Lid returning to release old work in a form familiar to devoted listeners. I imagine this is a pain of all those who come upon a deceased artist for whom they develop an intense devotion: We are left with the task — and the immense privilege — of working with what we have, and holding on to it with a tighter grasp, and locating it in our lives with ever more dedication and generosity. McBride's life was one of music, and now it is one we might discover in that music, folded away into the hours of sound and noise he developed in his own career and in his long and fruitful partnership with Wiltzie.

I find Stars of the Lid not only luminous and extraordinary, but utterly welcoming; if I could somehow establish a living space in the rooms furnished by these records, I would, and would regret ever having to leave. A friend once described their work as Schoenberg's "The Book of the Hanging Gardens" reimagined for the information age, and I can't help but agree with him — it really is, I feel, of that order and magnitude.

If you like Kevin Shields, Brian Eno, Boards of Canada or the more minimalist components of "Kid A", I would encourage you to sit down and give Stars of the Lid an earnest listen. For me, at least, the discovery of them reoriented the way I think about sound, and, for the first time, correctly modeled a juncture between the noisy, staticky plentitude of our world and the structured music that leaps from it. The thought of being able to find them again for the first time brings me to tears.

Summer Recap

Egan Turner



ACROSS
1 Indiana Jones instrument
5 "Where are you ___?"
9 Craig or Claire, for example
14 Activist Parks
15 New Rochelle university
16 Adored
17 50-Down movie with a summer 2024 sequel
19 "Invisible Cities" author Calvino
20 Guests
21 Sunscreen fig.
22 Previously, to Poe
23 See 60-Across
24 Savanna tree
28 "Good Luck, Babe!" artist with an explosive summer 2024
31 Relaxing location
33 Cruciverbalist's favorite cookie
34 What Clay became?
35 Summer 2024 event which introduced breaking to the international stage
40 Getting up there
41 Glance
42 Pi follower
43 Political figure in the news in summer 2024 following a historic decision from Joe Biden
48 Take ownership
49 Twisted Tea?
50 Shot ___
53 Loc. which takes 93 minutes to orbit Earth
54 Chocolate milk brand
56 Architect of the Louvre Pyramid
59 Artist with viral summer 2024 album "BRAT"
60 With 23-Across, groovy "The Simpsons" character
61 Meme popularized by a picture of a Shiba Inu
62 Simba's love interest
63 "___: Romulus"
64 Just got by
65 Three, in Tijuana

DOWN
1 Compose a message
2 High esteem
3 Debate topic
4 Duo
5 Ford model
6 Harvest a bulb
7 Responsibility
8 Yoga necessity
9 Horse trot sound
10 Nearby
11 "Sweet but Psycho" singer Max
12 "Mad Max" actor Gibson
13 Tokyo's former name
18 Menu item
21 Massachusetts town known for Halloween festivities
25 Team leader
26 "Me, too"
27 32-Down's love interest, for short
28 Jaguar or Ram
29 ___ dot
30 Suffix for arch or trick
31 Food fight sound
32 "Star Wars" queen Amidala
36 Mirage
37 Daytime TV dramas
38 Aah partner
39 Auditing agcy.
40 Gives a green light
44 Per person
45 Destroy or devastate
46 Raised, as children
47 "___ all be okay"
50 Disney animation studio
51 Parent's brother
52 State with the most counties
54 "Ah, I see"
55 Add color to
56 NAACP co-founder Wells
57 $1,000,000, for short
58 Tire pressure fig.
59 B followers

Reel Critic: Alien Romulus

By VICTORIA FRAU
Arts & Culture Editor

The newest addition to the "Alien" franchise hit theaters in August and serviced fans with a visually splendid but virtually unoriginal story. The film does, however, step out of its forebears' shadow in one respect when it transforms the birth horror allegory of its predecessors into... actual birth horror.

"Alien: Romulus" is set in between the events of the original "Alien" (1979) and its sequel "Aliens" (1986). The film takes place in a mining colony and follows three sets of young siblings, all suffering under the oppressive circumstances of their indenture in the same mines that killed their parents. The plot takes off wWhen Tyler (Archie Renaux) recruits the help of his ex-girlfriend Rain (Cailee Spaeny) and her android brother Andy (David Jonsson) to hijack a decommissioned space station and its cryosleep technology to escape to a distant planet. There, they accidentally awaken inert xenomorphs, the longtime antagonists in the "Alien" franchise. The group is rounded out by Tyler's pregnant sister Kay (Isabela Merced), their cousin Bjorn (Spike Fearn) and his adoptive sister Navarro (Aileen Wu).

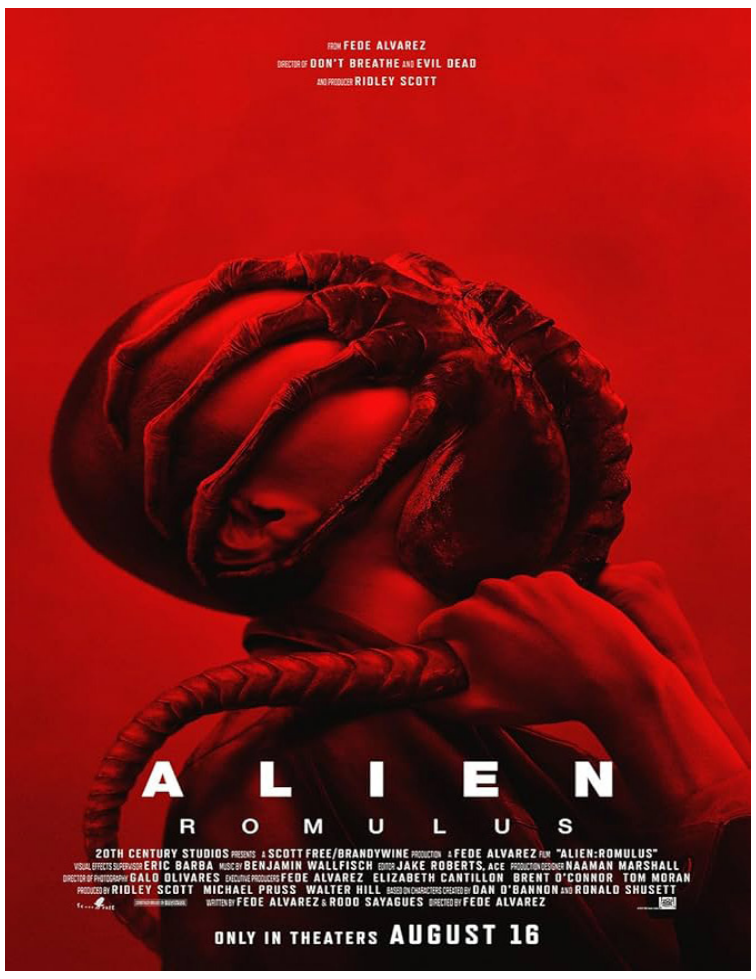
"Alien: Romulus" is largely an homage to the rest of the franchise and features stunning yet uninspired callbacks to the visual details of its beloved predecessors. Its one innovation is in anchoring the sexual allegory of the film's inherited monsters to Kay's pregnancy.

When "Alien" came out in 1979, it was hard to miss the flagrant subtext that linked the film's monster — (which, in its various forms, brutally penetrates, smothers, gestates in and rips open human bodies from the inside —) to experiences like rape, pregnancy and birth. It served as a testament to the effectiveness of birth as an instrument for horror, capitalizing through immersive sensory imagery on the visceral —– but largely unrealized —– fear in male audiences of the violation of their bodily autonomy.

The initial creators of "Alien" solicited fear in male viewers by design. . "That's how I'm going to attack the audience; I'm going to attack them sexually. And I'm not going after the women in the audience, I'm going to attack the men. I'm going to put in every image I can think of to make the men in the audience cross their legs,.'" said Dan O'Bannon, the screenwriter for the original film, in the "Alien Saga Documentary" (2002). It still feels remarkable for a movie so male-dominated in its construction to have effectively neutered its own audience's 'male gaze,', subverting an image that was typically a source of perverse pleasure when it happened to women and turning it into a source of pure horror by inflicting it upon a male character.

In a kind of double-reverse, "Alien: Romulus" builds on this creative tradition by attaching the film's most potent and explicitbulk of birth horror imagery to a pregnant female character. From the moment that Kay confides in Rain about her pregnancy, the admission acts as a ticking explosive element in the plot, which waits to explode until the film's third act. a Chekov's gun. One that doesn't go off until the third act.

Suffering from one of her numerous near-fatal injuries towards the end of the movie, Kay makes the desperate choice to inject herself with a serum that 'perfects' the human body using the DNA of the indestructible xenomorphs. The serum corrupts the young


FROM FEDE ALVAREZ
DIRECTOR OF DON'T BREATHE AND EVIL DEAD
AND PRODUCER RIDLEY SCOTT
ALIEN
ROMULUS
20TH CENTURY STUDIOS PRESENTS A SCOTT FREE/BRANDYWINE PRODUCTION A FEDE ALVAREZ FILM "ALIEN:ROMULUS"
VISUAL EFFECTS SUPERVISOR ERIC BARBA MUSIC BY BENJAMIN WALLFISCH EDITOR JAKE ROBERTS, ACE PRODUCTION DESIGNER NAAMAN MARSHALL
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY GALO OLIVARES EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS FEDE ALVAREZ ELIZABETH CANTILLON BRENT O'CONNOR TOM MORAN
PRODUCED BY RIDLEY SCOTT MICHAEL PRUSS WALTER HILL BASED ON CHARACTERS CREATED BY DAN O'BANNON AND RONALD SHUSETT
WRITTEN BY FEDE ALVAREZ & RODO SAYAGUES DIRECTED BY FEDE ALVAREZ
ONLY IN THEATERS AUGUST 16

COURTESY PHOTO

The film poster for "Alien: Romulus"

embryo and rapidly accelerates the gestation period resulting in Kay, minutes later, giving birth to a humongous xenomorph egg. The creature that sprouts from the egg is, admittedly, gloriously terrifying. It is approximately twelve feet tall and appears to be a human-xenomorph hybrid. The 'Offspring,', as it is called in the credits, is also meant to resemble characters called the Engineers, from "Prometheus" (2012).

The birth scene, on its own, is horrifying and grotesque. The image that follows, of the Offspring feeding from Kay's limp corpse, is somehow evenmuch worse. It's a visual motif foreshadowed earlier in the film, first by the allusion to the story of the twins Remus and Romulus (who traditionally are depicted suckling a she-wolf in their infancy) and the inclusion of the painting "View of the Hôtel de Ville of Marseille during the Plague of 1720" by Michel Serre. In the scene where Bjorn discovers the painting onboard the space station, the camera closes in on two of the figures in the foreground, a dead, gray woman sprawled on the floor, and a young child feeding from her breast.

The final shot of Kay, discolored and literally sucked dry by her own 'child' is harrowing and its value in the narrative is nauseatingly impressive. It depicts the corrupting forces of the universe, untameable by even the most egregious capitalist greed, sapping the vulnerable human form of life itself.

This moment lingers in the viewer's mind as the credits roll and colors the conclusion with an incredible, fitting... hollowness. Kay's entire role within the movie, consisting of few lines and the brunt of the physical brutality, is sickeningly in keeping with her demise. gels with her ending in a sickening way. She is used, in her vulnerable form, as a punching bag for the film's every symbolic blow.

It's uncertain whether the creative decision to interpret the sexual imagery of the original works so literally and to use a woman as its vehicle is one to applaud or condemn. But viewing the two movies in their respective political contexts is discouraging, to say the least. "Alien" was released just six years after the passing of Roe v. Wade, the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case that, for 49 years, federally protected a pregnant person's right to have an abortion if they so chose. Two summers ago, the case Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health Organization rewrote that precedent. Since then, twenty-two state bans and restrictions on abortions have gone into effect.

We are living in a time in America where pregnancy and birth are topics that incite real fear and horror. And "Alien: Romulus" indicates that male artists and the major entertainment conglomerate they operate under might be too comfortable capitalizing on that fear. Art as an instrument for change is only effective when it challenges systems of power; when it makes those who are comfortable living in unjust times uncomfortable.

Unfortunately, the most interesting part of the movie is the irony with which it exploits female pain, hollowing out a subversive creative tradition, much in the fashion of its own antagonists.

FALL SPORTS PREVIEWS

By JACK McGUIRE, TING CUI & JONATHAN BUCHHOLZ
Senior Sports Editor & Sports Editors

Courtesy Photo / Will Costello

The Middlebury men's soccer team celebrates a goal together.

Women's Soccer

Head Coach: Peter Kim
Players to watch: Lucy Patton '25, Abby Ward '25, Gigi Day '27

The Middlebury women's soccer team kicked off their season on Sept. 4 with a strong 1–0 victory over Clark, and then beat Hamilton 1–0 this past Saturday. With eyes set on securing the program's fifth NESCAC Championship — having claimed the title twice in the past five seasons — the Panthers are poised for a strong campaign. Last season Middlebury narrowly missed out on the NESCAC tournament, finishing the season in ninth place. Key players include Captain Patton '25, who played in all 15 games last season, starting 12 of them and logging over 1,000 minutes on the field. Ward '25 is another to watch this season, having played in all 15 games last year with 12 starts. She made a significant impact in last year's final match against Williams, logging two assists. Finally, keep an eye out for Gigi Day '27 who returns to midfield after making history as the first Panther to earn NESCAC Rookie of the Year.

Key Competitions: Wesleyan (Away–Sept. 22), Tufts (Away–Oct. 19), Williams (Home–Oct. 29)

Men's Soccer

Head Coach: Alex Elias
Players to watch: Luke Madden '24.5, Hank Nelson '25, Kyle Nilsson '25

The Middlebury men's soccer team had a strong season in 2023 with their fifth consecutive appearance in the NCAA tournament, and their fourth trip to the quarterfinals in program history. This year, the program looks to build on the successes of last season. Ranked fifth, the team has already kicked off the 2024 with a strong start, securing a 4–0 victory over Norwich, a 5–1 win against Keene State and a 3–1 triumph over Hamilton. This season the defense is anchored by Captain Luke Madden '24.5 and Hank Nelson '25, who both logged over 1,700 minutes on the field last year. Up front, captain Kyle Nilsson '25, who played the second most minutes with 1,778 and scored a career best five goals, is the forward to watch.

Key Competitions: Bowdoin (Away–Oct. 5), Tufts (Away–Oct. 19), Williams (Home–Oct. 29)

Women's Cross Country

Head Coach: Nicole Wilkerson
Athletes to Watch: Audrey MacLean '27, Morgane Orcutt '25, Bea Parr '25

After a strong rebound last year, the women's cross country team looks to continue to improve. This team only loses one runner from last year's NESCAC Championship, where they placed third and looks to continue to thrive off of young talent. Middlebury retains standout performer MacLean '27, who was awarded NCAA All-American, All-NESCAC First Team and NESCAC Rookie of the Year accolades in the 2023 season. Captain Parr '25 came in fourth at the conference championship and won the All-NESCAC First Team title last season. With a large class of first-years, injury is seemingly the only thing standing in the way from the Panthers improving upon last year's success.

Key Competitions: Aldrich Invitational (Home–Sept. 14), NESCAC Championship (Away–Nov. 2)

Men's Cross Country

Head Coach: Nicole Wilkerson
Athletes to Watch: Ziggy Goddard '25, Drew Donahue '25, Shef West '26

The men's cross country team has already gotten off to a strong start to the season, winning the Silloway Maple Syrup Challenge this past weekend. Seven Panthers finished in the top 10 of the race including Harry Griff '26 who won the race. Griff is a part of an impressive core of runners that led the cross country team to third place in the NCAA MidEast Regional Championships and 19th in the NCAA Championships. Ziggy Goddard '25 and Drew Donahue '25 look to lead the men's team as they both head into their final seasons. Last year, both Goddard and Donahue earned all-region honors.

Key Competitions: Aldrich Invitational (Home–Sep. 14), Connecticut College Invitational (Away–Oct. 19), NESCAC Championship (Away–Nov. 2)

Women's Golf

Head Coach: Tim Walko
Athletes to watch: Morgan Lee '26, Ella Han '27, Audrey Tir '25

The Middlebury women's golf team had a solid season last year, earning first place at the Hamilton and Wesleyan Invitationals and finishing third at the Jack Leaman invitational hosted by Amherst. Under the leadership of head coach Tim Walko — now in his second year after being appointed last fall — the team will continue to build on their momentum from last season which culminated in a third place finish at the NESCAC Championships. At those championships, Lee '26 tied for fifth place overall, carding a two-day total of 153, while Tir '27 placed 12th with a total of 156, including a 73 in the opening round. Han '27 also impressed, climbing six spots on the final day to finish in a three-way tie for ninth place. Both Lee '26 and Tir '27 each earned a spot on the All-NESCAC First Team and the Women's Golf Coaches Association (WCGA) All-Region 1 Squad. Han '27 also secured a spot on the All-NESCAC Second Team.

Key Competitions: George Phinney Classic (Home–Sep. 21-22), Williams Invitational (Away–Sept. 28-29), Hamilton Fall Invitational (Away–Oct. 5-6)

Men's Golf

Head Coach: Justin Kumpulanian
Athletes to Watch: Benny Burns '25, Charlie Schulman '26, Brendan Maykel '25

In coach Justin Kumpulanian's first full year as head coach, the men's golf team looks to return to the dominance that led them to a 2023 NESCAC Championship. In last spring's NESCAC Championship, the team came in fifth place thanks to strong performances from Charlie Schulman '26 and Brendan Maykel '25. Schulman finished in a tie for sixth place, earning him all NESCAC accolades, while Maykel finished in a tie for 16th place. The team is looking to build on those

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FALL SPORTS PREVIEWS

COURTESY PHOTO / STEPHEN GOLDBURG

Caroline Segal '24.5 runs up the field. Middlebury's field hockey team is looking to claim its seventh consecutive NCAA Championship.

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strong performances from last season and get back to the top of the NESCAC this year.

Key Competitions: Duke Nelson Invitational (Home - Sep. 14-15), Bowdoin Fall Invitational (Away - Sep 28-29), Ekwanok Sap Bucket Challenge (Home - Oct. 15)

Women's Tennis

Head Coach: Taka Bertrand (On Leave), Aaron Diamond
Athletes to watch: Claudia Miller '25, Sahana Raman '25, Lulu Wu '26, Ananya Annapantula '27

After making it to the NCAA semifinals seven years in a row, the Panthers bowed out of the national tournament in the quarterfinals to Claremont-Mudd-Scripps. The outlook is bright for the Middlebury team this year, as they retain much of last year's talent. Captain Raman filled in the first spot of the singles ladder all of last season and should have another strong season this year. Losses of Gena Huang and Amy Delman will be felt at the fourth and fifth singles spots, but the addition of three first-years, including Elizabeth Doak '28 out of IMG Academy, hope to fill in the holes. The Panthers consistently make the NCAA tournament year after year and should be in the mix for a NESCAC championship this spring.

Key Competitions: ITA Regional Championships (Away–Sept. 20–22), Middlebury Panther Challenge (Home–Oct. 11–13)

Men's Tennis

Head Coach: Andrew Thomson
Athletes to watch: Julian Wu '26, Nathan Jackson '26

Last spring, the Panthers boasted an impressive 20–5 record and made it all the way to the semifinals of the NESCAC and NCAA tournaments. Key to this year's success will be finding replacements for Noah Laber '24 and Robby Ward '24 who filled the top and third spots of last year's singles ladder respectively. Wu '26 and Jackson '26 are poised to move up this year and take the first and second singles spots respectively. Compared to the spring, the fall tennis season is quiet and does not have team scoring, but the team hopes to prepare well for another strong spring season with four returning NESCAC All-American players.

Key Competitions: Middlebury Invitational (Home–Sep. 21–22), ITA Regional Championships (Away–Sept. 27–29)

Women's Field Hockey

Head Coach: Katherine DeLorenzo
Athletes to watch: Amy Griffin '24.5, Katherine Lantzy '25, Caroline Segal '24.5

The Middlebury Field Hockey team looks to continue their era of dominance and win their seventh straight NCAA Championship. The team has already started off their season strong, going 2-0 and beating division foes Hamilton College 3-1 in their season opener. The team has a formidable group of upperclassmen to help lead them in their quest for another championship. Amy Griffin '24.5 returns for her senior season after leading the NESCAC with 23 goals last year and winning the National Field Hockey Coaches Association Player of the Year Award. Caroline Segal '24.5 provides support at forward after she registered 13 goals and 12 assists in the 2023 campaign. After the graduation of goalie KK Newton '24 last season, the 2024 Panthers will feature a new player between the goal posts. Madeline DiLemme '28, Izzy Redzic '27 and Thea Rosenzweig '26 could all see time at the position this season.

Key Competitions: Connecticut College (Home Sep. 28), Colby College (Home–Oct. 12), Williams College (Home–Oct. 29)

Men's Football

Head Coach: Doug Mandigo '96
Athletes to watch: Patrick Jamin '25, Thomas Perry '25, Tomás Kenary '24.5

Last season, the Panthers went 8-1, leading them to a co-NESCAC Championship with the Trinity College Bantams. This year, the football team returns a strong squad that could become repeat champions. Last year, the Panthers were a well balanced team, placing third in the NESCAC in points scored with 251 and allowing the second fewest amount of points in the conference. After graduating last year's stand-out quarterback Cole Kennon '24, the Panthers will need a new leader under center. The Panthers have six inexperienced passers in their quarterback room, and Coach Mandigo will have to choose who he wants leading his offense this season. However, whoever is playing quarterback for the Panthers will have ample support. Offensive lineman Thomas Perry '25 made the all-NESCAC team last year, and Patrick Jamin '25 is a prolific receiver that averaged 91.8 receiving yards per game last season. On defense, Dave Filias '25 and Tomás Kenary '24.5 create a formidable defensive line to put pressure on opposing offenses.

Key Competitions: Wesleyan University (Home–Sep. 14), Trinity College (Home–Oct. 19), Hamilton College (Home–Nov. 2)

Volleyball

Head Coach: Sarah Raunecker '92
Athletes to Watch: Campbell Keller '26, Molly Harrison '27, Lauren Baxter '27

After a strong 16-9 campaign last season, the volleyball team is poised for another strong season this year. Last year's team came in third place in the NESCAC, and made it to the second round of the NCAA tournament. A number of key contributors from last year's team return this season, giving the team a strong chance to perform well in NESCAC competition. Molly Harrison '27 and Ava Tuccio '26 are set to lead the Panther offense. Harrison led the team with 365 points last season while Tuccio added a respectable 191.5. In three games so far this season, Harrison leads the team with 37 points while Lauren Baxter '27 is second with 32 points. Campbell Keller '26 leads the team's defense. So far this year, Keller leads the team in receptions with three and digs with 37.

Key Competitions: Connecticut College (Home–Sep. 20), Colby College (Away–Oct. 12), Wesleyan University (Home–Oct 19)

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